

## ORNITHOLOGY IN THE BIBLE

BY

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*Ah, the land of the rustling of wings,*

*Which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia.*

Before turning to the passages dealing with birds, a brief glance at the geography of the region involved will be useful. The area with which we are concerned is roughly Palestine, that is Canaan and Syria and the neighbouring lands of Arabia, the Sinai Peninsula and more distant Egypt.

Dean Stanley in his charming *Sinai and Palestine* points out how the Peninsula of Sinai is remarkable for possessing the three grand features of earthly scenery, the sea, the desert and the mountains. The great desert area is, however, cut into by three great clefts, the Nile on the west, the Gulf of Suez in the centre and the Gulf of Akaba on the east, which last merges into the deep valley of the Arabah and yet deeper Jordan valley, further on. Palestine forms a high level tract lying between the plains of Assyria and the Mediterranean. Long before the war made it a reality, it was familiar to all of us of the older generation from very early days, as a land intimately connected with the absorption of tiresome chronological and historical minutiae concerning an apparently very overrated people. From north to south a great limestone ridge, which splits into two parallel chains, traverses the whole country, while four rivers the Orontes, Litani (or Leontes), the Barada (Abana of the O.T.) and the Jordon flow through it. The last is the most important and is the main artery of Palestine. On either side of it run chains of mountains linking up with those of Sinai. Palestine is thus curiously isolated. On the east is a desert, in the centre the deep Jordon valley, a formidable trench, on the west the sea, on the south desert again and on the north the Lebanon range. So this small area, only some one hundred and forty miles long and sixty wide, offers variations in climate, soil and vegetation which make it an ideal place for animal life of all kinds. While the Jordon valley falls to 2,300 feet below sea-level, the mountains of Lebanon rise to over 2,000 feet above it, with snow-capped peaks. Thus snow-covered hills, deep and fertile valleys, dry hot winds from the deserts and cool sea breezes, offer unusual opportunities for bird life, through the various plant and insect life the area produces.

Palestine lies in the Holarctic region of Newton or Palaearctic of Sclater above the Ethiopian and Indian, and many bird forms common in India are met with, such as bulbuls, the white-breasted kingfisher, sun-birds, and many birds of prey.

The birds Moses encountered were probably much the same as those met with in this region to-day.

The birds mentioned in the Bible are not of course all those seen by the writers but only those which entered most into their daily lives either as beneficent or unkindly visitants, and those which were striking and useful in metaphor.

To the Israelites lying out on the slopes of Mount Hermon or watching their flocks and herds in the fertile plains, the birds of prey were of peculiar interest, and but too familiar and dreaded visitors. How often must the youthful David have watched

“ the eagle that swoopeth on the prey.”

We may, therefore, take the birds of prey together as a conspicuous group. This is the more useful in that it is not always easy to say if an eagle, kite or vulture is referred to. But is this surprising? Take any five of your friends out and see how many birds they can distinguish even when not so closely connected as the birds of prey or so similar in habits and appearance, that save in their size and idiosyncracies of flight they offer no very distinctive signs.

I would here note that throughout this account the Revised Version (R.V.) is referred to unless the Authorized Version (A.V.) is especially noted.

The birds of prey mentioned are, eagles, the glede, falcons, gier-eagle, the kite, hawk, osprey, ossifrage and vulture. The owls may be dealt with separately.

The A.V. and the R.V. differ in the translation of the principal passage which mentions these birds. I may add that throughout this article I have quoted somewhat fully as many members of the Society may be unfamiliar with our Bible, while my own experience has proved how seldom my countrymen's houses contain a copy of the Revised Version.

The two passages lie in Leviticus and Deuteronomy and enumerate birds which were unclean and therefore not fit for food.

#### R. V.

*Lev.* 11-13, 17 :

And these ye shall have in abomination among fowls ; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination ; the eagle, and the gier-eagle, and the osprey ; and the kite, and the faclon after its kind ; every raven after its kind and the ostrich, and the night-hawk, and the sea-mew, and the hawk after its kind ; and the little owl, and the cormorant, and the great owl ; and the horned owl, and the pelican, and the vulture ; and the stork, the heron after its kind, and the hoopoe and the bat.

#### A.V. (*as given*)

Eagle, and the ossifrage, and the osprey and the vulture, and the kite after his kind ; every raven after his kind ; and the owl, and the night-hawk, and the cuckow, and the hawk after his kind, and the little owl, and the cormorant, and the great owl, and the swan, and the pelican, and the gier-eagle, and the stork, the heron after her kind, and the lapwing and the bat.

The changes are those of gier-eagle for ossifrage, kite for vulture, falcon for kite, ostrich for owl, sea-mew for cuckow, horned owl for swan, vulture for gier-eagle and hoopoe for lapwing. The bat seems to have been looked upon as a bird.

In the corresponding passage in Deuteronomy (14-11) the lists run thus :

## R.V.

Eagle, gier-eagle, osprey, glede, falcon, kite, raven, ostrich, night-hawk, little owl, great owl, horned owl, pelican, vulture, cormorant, stork, heron and hoopoe.

## A.V.

Eagle, ossifrage, osprey, glede, kite, vulture, raven, owl, night-hawk, cuckow, hawk, little owl, great owl, swan, pelican, gier-eagle, cormorant, stork, heron and lapwing.

It should be borne in mind that the Hebrew word is of course the same in the A.V. and R.V., only the interpretation is new.

## BIRDS OF PREY

In his solitude and grief, and, be it added, the lecturing of his prosy but well-meaning friends, Job seems to have turned instinctively to nature.

*Job* 12-1 :

No doubt ye are the people,  
And wisdom shall die with you.  
I have understanding as well as you

7. But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee ;  
And the fowls of the air, and they shall teach thee ;  
Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee.

Some of the finest passages on birds are his. In chapters 36 and 37 Elihu pours out his long-winded discourse naively commencing with

Suffer me a little and I will shew thee  
For I have yet somewhat to say on God's behalf.

Until God, losing patience, speaks from the storm which has gathered as Elihu discoursed, and exclaims,

Who is he that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge ?

and then asks Job who he is and of what account :

39-27 :

Doth the hawk soar by thy wisdom,  
And stretch her wings toward the south ?  
Doth the eagle mount up at thy command ?  
And make her nest on high ?  
She dwelleth on the rock, and hath her lodging there,  
Upon the crag of the rock and the stronghold.  
From thence she spieth out the prey :  
Her eyes behold it afar off.  
Her young ones also suck up blood :  
And where the slain is, there is she.

Possibly here some confusion has arisen with kites or vultures but many eagles do eat carrion, at times. I have myself seen the Indian tawny eagle (*Aquila vindhiana*) sharing a dead cow with kites, vultures and dogs.

The passage is an astonishing summary of eagle life. The strength, swiftness and savage nature of these birds are constantly used in metaphor :

*Job* 9-25 :

Now my days are swifter than a post :  
They flee away, they see no good  
They are passed away as the swift ships :  
As the eagle that swoopeth on the prey.

The post is the ' harkara ' of India, each man doing his section of a journey :

*Jer.* 51-31 :

One post shall run to meet another.

Solomon used the eagle in metaphor :

*Prov.* 30-18 :

There be three things which are too wonderful for me,  
Yea, four which I know not :  
The way of an eagle in the air,  
The way of a serpent on a rock,  
The way of a ship in the midst of the sea,  
And the way of a man with a maid.

Then there is that fine passage in Jeremiah, in chapter 4, where in verse 13 the swiftness of the eagle is referred to ; it is dramatic in form and for proper appreciation the speakers should be indicated:

*Jer.* 4-11 :

10. *Prophet.*

Ah, Lord God ! Surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, ' Ye shall have peace ' ; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul. And at that time shall it be said to this people and to Jerusalem.

*A Cry :*

A hot wind from the bare heights in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people. not to fan, nor to cleanse.

*The Lord :*

A full wind from these shall come for me : now will I also utter judgments against them. Behold, he shall come up as clouds and his chariots shall be as the whirlwind ; his horses swifter than eagles.

*The People :*

Woe unto us for we are spoiled :

Here whirlwind, horse and swooping eagle are brought together as the swiftest things the writer knew.

In Habbakuk, which is really written throughout in dramatic form, though this is not brought out in our Bible, he refers to the approaching Chaldean attack. The Prophet cries to the Lord in verses 1-4 and in verses 5-10 ; the Lord replies :

V. 6. *The Lord :*

For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans that bitter and hasty nation, which march through the breadth of the earth to possess dwelling places which are not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful : their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves. Their horses also are swifter than leopards, and are more fierce than evening wolves ; and their horsemen spread themselves : yea their horsemen come from far ; they fly as an eagle that hasteth to devour.

In some passages confusion between vultures and eagles can be clearly detected. Thus :

*Micah. 8-16 :*

Make thee bald, and poll thee for the children of thy delight,  
Enlarge thy baldness as the eagle :  
For they are gone into captivity from thee.

No eagles are bald, whereas vultures often are. Probably the well-known passage in Matthew is another instance :  
24-28 :

Wheresoever the carcase is there will the eagles be gathered together.

In both cases the marginal reading is ' vultures.'

In the wonderful song sung by Moses in the 32nd chapter of Deuteronomy the eagle is used in metaphor :

*Deut. 32-10, 11 :*

He found him in a desert land,  
And in the waste howling wilderness ;  
He compassed him about, he cared for him,  
He kept him as the apple of his eye :  
As an eagle that stirreth up her nest,  
That fluttereth over her young,  
He spread abroad his wings, he took them,  
He bare them on his pinions :

The A.V. has for the last line :

taketh them, beareth them on his wings

apparently with the idea that an eagle carried its young in this way.

In that most wonderful of laments (quoted at the end of this article) David compares Saul and Jonathan to eagles (II Sam. 8-17).

Like Moses, Isaiah uses eagles in referring to God's care for Israel : and the freeing of God's servants :

*Is. 40-28 :*

. . . the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not neither is weary. . . . But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength : they shall mount up with wings as eagles : they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint,

There are many other passages, which will be found in the index of references, but these are perhaps the most important.

Vultures are specifically referred to in certain passages, besides the marginal alternative readings mentioned.

The vulture is one of the unclean birds, but the R.V. has gier-eagle where the A.V. has vulture, and a marginal reading ' great vulture ' against ' eagle '. In the corresponding passage in Deuteronomy the R.V. has ' gier-eagle ' where the A.V. has ' ossifrage '.

The vulture was of course as familiar an object to the Israelite as it is to us in India.

The vulture occurs in no passages except in these lists, in the R. V. as in the two passages in the A. V. viz., Job 28-7 and Is. 34-15 we now have ' bird of prey ' in the first and ' kite ' in the second.

Without going into the question too closely it will be interesting to consider the basis on which these translations are founded,

Generally the R.V. has accepted the premise that resemblance between the modern Arabic name and the early Hebrew word is a sure guide to identification of the bird.

The Hebrew word translated 'eagle' is 'nesher' from a root meaning 'to tear with the beak'. This corresponds with the Arabic word 'naṣr' (نسر) with an identical meaning which though also used as a generic term, with qualifying adjectives for eagles, vultures, and ospreys, is usually applied to the Gryphon vultures (*Gyps fulvus*) and this is no doubt the bird meant. The passage in Mich. 1-16 where the word 'nesher' is used also shews this while the passages in Job 39-27, 30, Jer. 49-16 describe it well. The Assyrian vulture god, Nisroch, moreover, was the Gryphon vulture, the marginal reading actually giving 'great vulture'. The Hebrew word 'rāchām' (Lev. 11-18; Deut. 14-17) is the same as the Arabic 'rakhma' (رأحمة) which the R.V. translates 'vulture' in place of the 'gier-eagle' of the A.V. The Arabic word designates the White Scavenger Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) a near relative of the 'Pharaoh's chicken' of our cantonments. The word 'vulture' is a translation of three Hebrew terms in the A. V., 'da-āh' (Lev. 11-14) and 'dayyah' or 'dayyoth' (Deut. 14-13; Is. 34-15). But in the R. V. it is rendered 'kite' in these places. The third term is 'ayyah' (Lev. 11-14; Deut. 14-13; Job 28-7) which the R. V. renders 'falcon'. The latter certainly means a small bird of prey and hence falcon is better 'hidayah' in Arabic is used of a kite. Possibly the 'daah' was the Red Kite (*Milvus regalis*) and 'ayyah' the black (*M. ater*).

The Gier-eagle or Ossifrage translates 'peres' (Lev. 11-13; Deut. 14-12) or 'the breaker'. The Lammageier or Bearded Vulture (*Gypætus barbatus*) was said to throw tortoises, etc., down from a height to break them, hence its name of 'bone-breaker'. The 'glede' (Deut. 14-13) may be a kite or hawk. The word is according to the *New Oxford Dictionary* used locally for buzzards, the osprey, and the peregrine, but more properly for the kite (*M. regalis*). The word is derived from a root meaning to 'glide'. The Hebrew word so translated is 'raah'.

The word 'hawk' translates the Hebrew 'nes' (Gen. 40-10; Lev. 11-16; Deut. 14-15; Job 39-26) and probably refers to the Kestrels, of which *T. chenchris* is commonest: but it may refer to the sparrow-hawk. But the term is generic for the smaller kinds of bird of prey. Some eighteen species of hawk have been recorded from Palestine.

A few passages deal with these birds:

*Job* 39-26:

Doth the hawk soar by thy wisdom?  
And stretch her wings toward the south?

*Is.* 34-15:

There shall the kites be gathered, every one with her mate.

It is thus clear that it is no easy matter to distinguish the different species from the words used.

In the New Testament in Matthew 24-28 and Luke 17-37 the word translated eagle is 'ætos' (*aetos*), though vultures are certainly meant. In Revelations 4-7, 12-14 eagles may be intended.

Falcons besides being in the lists of the unclean are mentioned in Job 28-7 where the A.V. has vulture. This last passage is very obscure in the A. V., whereas the R.V. clearly shows that a mine is being described, and well described :

*Job 28, 1-11 :*

Surely there is a mine for silver,  
And a place for gold which they refine.  
Iron is taken out of the earth,  
And brass is molten out of the stone.  
Man setteth an end to darkness,  
And searcheth out to the furthest bound  
The stones of thick darkness and of the shadow of death.  
He breaketh open a shaft away from where men sojourn ;  
They are forgotten of the foot that passeth by ;  
They hang afar from men, they swing to and fro.  
As for the earth out of it cometh bread ;  
And underneath it is turned up as it were by fire.  
The stones thereof are the place of sapphires,  
And it hath dust of gold.  
That path no bird of prey knoweth,  
Neither hath the falcon's eye seen it :  
The proud beasts have not trodden it,  
Nor hath the fierce lion passed thereby.  
He putteth forth his hand upon the flinty rock ;  
His eye seeth every precious thing.  
He bindeth the streams that they trickle not ;  
And the thing that is hid bringeth he forth to light.

One is apt to regret that the keen-sighted 'vulture,' as in the A.V., was not retained where we now have falcon.

*Game Birds.*—The only game birds mentioned are the partridge and the quail. It is curious that ducks are nowhere mentioned, although they must have been common enough even if they did not enter much into the life of the Jewish shepherd, and were perhaps not eaten. It has been suggested that the "fatted fowl," of I Kings 4-23, may be a duck or a goose, as the latter were fattened by the Egyptians.

Partridge is a translation of the Hebrew word 'qōrē,' which occurs twice only, in I Sam. 26-20, Jer. 17-11. The Hebrew name is onomatopœic from the bird's call.

The 'partridge of the mountains'

(I Sam. 26-20) is probably *Ammoperdix heyi* which is very common near the Dead Sea. It should, however, be noted that the Septuagint has, 'is come out to seek my life' where our Bible has 'a flea'. When hunted this bird conceals itself easily owing to its protective colouring. The other partridge met with is the Red-legged Chukor (*Caccabis chukor*) well known in India. Its cry is heard everywhere. The Arabic name for this bird is 'karia' (قارية).

The sandgrouse has been also suggested. In Eccus. 11-30 it is mentioned as being used as a decoy ; or possibly for fighting :

Like as a partridge taken and kept in a cage so is the heart of the proud.

Partridges are still used as decoys to catch Chukor.

The passage in Jeremiah has caused much comment : Jer. 17-11 :

As the partridge that gathereth young which she hath not brought forth, so is he that getteth riches, and not by right ; in the midst of his days they shall leave him, and at his end he shall be a fool.

The words are spoken in a series of remarks not unlike proverbs. The passage may be corrupt as there is nothing known of this bird to lead one to suppose that partridge broods get mixed up.

Quail are first mentioned in Exodus 16-13 :

And it came to pass at even that the quails came up, and covered the camp : and in the morning the dew lay round about the camp.

Num. 13-31 :

And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, about a day's journey on this side, and a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and about two cubits above the face of the earth. And the people rose up all that day, and all the night and all the next day, and gathered the quails.

The same event is alluded to in Psalms 78-25 and 105-39 :

The birds were migrating and driven by the high wind to rest after crossing the sea. They come in March ordinarily in vast quantities. The Hebrew for quail (*Coturnix communis*) is 'selav' connected with a root meaning 'to be plump'. The Arabic word is similar, 'salwa' (سلاوي). Sandgrouse have been suggested here also but so strong a flier would scarcely become exhausted in this way.

We may now pass on to birds of other classes. The words translated 'bird' are in the Old Testament four in number (i) 'oph', rendered by bird or fowl, the latter generally described as 'of heaven' or 'of the air' (Gen. 1-21, 30 ; Lev. 1-14 ; Job 12-7 ; Ps. 50-11 ; etc.) ;

(ii) 'ayit', rendered 'fowls' or 'birds of prey' in the A. V. and R. V. respectively (Gen. 15-11, 13 ; Job. 28-7 ; Is. 46-11 ; Ez. 39-4 ; etc.) ;

(iii) 'tsippor', Arabic 'asfur' : (اصفور) is used of all small twittering birds (Gen. 7-14 ; Lev. 14-4 ; Ps. 102-8 ; etc.) ;

(iv) 'baal kanaph' or 'possessor of a wing' (Pro. 1-17 ; Is. 10-14 ; etc.).

In the New Testament two words are used 'ta petaina' (τα πετεινα) see Mt. 13-4 ; Lk. 13-19 ; and ornea (ορνεα) for 'birds of prey' (Rev. 18-2 ; 19-17, 21).

Birds were not unsympathetically noted as we find their salient habits recorded. Migration is referred to, thus Isaiah evidently takes this metaphor from large migrating flocks, when he says :

Is. 31-15 :

As birds flying so will the Lord of hosts protect Jerusalem.

Jer. 8-7 :

Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times, and the turtle and the swallow and the crane observe the time of their coming ; but my people know not the ordinance of the Lord (cf. Cant. 2-12.)



Care of their young (Deut. 32-11; Mic. 23-37; etc.) their helplessness (Ps. 104-12). They were also tamed (James 3-7). Birds were used as food when clean and not in the prohibited list, quail, partridge, pigeons and doves are mentioned as eaten, while the Talmud gives a good deal of information on keeping birds for this purpose. The very poor eat sparrows (Mt. 10-29), while the eggs of clean birds were also used as food (Deut. 22-6; Is. 10-14; Lk. 11-12) The verse in Job is doubtful:

*Job* 6-6:

Can that which hath no savour be eaten without salt?  
Or is there any taste in the white of an egg?

The marginal reading 'purslain' for the white of an egg is apparently correct and not as in the text.

*Bittern*.—This is one of those cases, not many, in which the Revisers seem to have gone astray. Where the A.V. has bittern the R. V. has porcupine. As will be seen below it endows the porcupine with vocal powers and an agility it certainly never possessed.

*Is.* 14-23:

For I will also make it (Babylon) a possession for the bittern and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the bosom of destruction.

A.V.

*Zeph.* 2-13:

And the flocks shall lie down in the midst of her (Nineveh), all the beasts of the nations both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; their voice shall sing in the windows. . . .

*Is.* 34-11:

But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl and the raven shall dwell in it. . . .

Whereas bitterns with their mysterious 'booming' call, cormorants, ravens, and even the pelican, who takes the cormorant's place in the R.V., are suited to ruined places and pools of water and some of them can also perch, no porcupine ever climbed on to a 'chapter', as the R.V. has it, or sang in a window! The Revisers took the Hebrew word 'quippod' as porcupine owing to its resemblance to the Arabic 'kunfud' (قنفذ).

*Cocks and hens*.—Domestic fowls came into use, it appears, about 4 B.C. since all earlier representations are of wild fowl, as the drooping tail shows. The Old Testament nowhere mentions them but we meet with them in the New Testament (Lk. 13-34). The crowing of the cock is dramatically used in the well-known scene with Peter (Mt. 14-30): this cock-crow was the third watch just before dawn.

*Cormorant and Pelican*.—The word 'qāath' in Hebrew is translated cormorant in the A.V. but Pelican in the R.V. so that the cormorant in the R. V. is only mentioned in the lists of prohibited birds. The root of the Hebrew word means 'to vomit' (*Zeph.* 2-14; *Is.* 22-11; 102-6). Actually the Pelican is not 'of the wilderness' in the sense of desert as it is a water haunting bird.

Two species are common *P. onocrotalus* and *P. crispus*, the latter having curled feathers on its head.

The word translated cormorant in the R.V. is 'shālākh' that is a 'diver' (Lev. 11-17; Deut. 14-17). Its harsh cry is well known. There are two species *Phalacrocorax carbo* and *P. pygmaeus*.

*Crane and Swallow*.—Translation has associated these very different birds, and the swift. The word 'sūs' or 'sīs' (Is. 38-14; Jer. 8-6; Zac. 10-3; Ps. 32-9) is in the A. V. rendered by crane but in the R.V. by swallow. It should actually be swift. In the same passages the A.V. translates 'agūr' swallow and the R.V. crane. Is. 38-14:

Like a swallow or a crane so did I chatter,  
I did mourn as a dove.

*Jer. 8-7.*

. . . and the swallow and the crane observe the time of their coming.

In Psalm 84-3; 26-2: it is the word 'derōr' that is translated rightly swallow: 84-3:

Yea, the sparrow hath found her an house,  
And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young,  
Even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.

These references are generally appropriate except that the term chatter is not very clear as though swallows might perhaps be said to chatter, cranes utter a more sonorous and trumpet-like note.

Cranes (*Grus communis*) are met with in winter in enormous numbers. Dean Stanley recounts how near Wadi Haderah the sky was literally darkened by a vast flight of red-legged cranes, with black and white wings. In the case of swifts and swallows in India one is familiar with their hordes building in temples and mosques.

*Crow*.—Not perhaps really distinguished from the raven. But it is only mentioned in the Apocrypha, in Baruch 6-54.

*Cuckoo and Sea-mew*.—The Cuckoo (Lev. 11-16: Deut. 14-15) has vanished from the R.V. giving place to the Sea-mew. The Hebrew word is 'shahaph.' It was a water bird and may have been a gull. It is rightly placed in the list of the unclean which a cuckoo would not be.

*Dove and Turtle-dove*.—Words used in the Hebrew are three, and are not clearly distinguished as between doves and pigeons, which is not surprising seeing that modern ornithology cannot successfully differentiate between the two. The three words used in Hebrew for these birds are:—(i) 'yonah' (Lev. 5-7) which come from a root meaning to mourn and refers more to pigeons; (ii) 'tor' meaning a turtle-dove (Lev. 12-6; Can. 2-12), an onomatopœic word representing its cry, and (iii) 'gozal' really the young of any bird, a 'cheeper' (Deut. 22-11) but also used for young pigeon (Gen. 15-9).

The first mention of the dove is in the story of the Flood (Gen. 8-8). Doves were evidently domesticated in early days. They were used for sacrifice as were also young pigeons (Gen. 15-9). The brilliance of its colouring (Ps. 68-13), its harmlessness (Mt. 10-16), its helplessness (Ps. 74-19) are all referred to. It was used

as a common name and as a term of affection (Cant. 1-15 ; 4-1 ; 5-2 ; 12 ; 6-9). It is also used as a type of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 3-16).

Dean Stanley describes how at Askalon the doves formerly sacred to Venus still inhabited the haunts of their ancestors, though the temple with its rites had long passed away. In a siege the dung of doves was eaten (I K 6-25).

Blue rock pigeons are met with in large flocks in the 'wadis' or gorges : read pigeons for doves below :

Is. 60-8 :

Who are these that fly as a cloud,  
And as the doves to their windows.

In Ps. 55-6 it should read (yonah) pigeons :

And I said, Oh had I wings like a dove  
Then would I fly away and be at rest.  
Lo, then would I wander far off,  
I would lodge in the wilderness.  
I would haste me to a shelter  
From the storm, wind and tempest.

The arrival of these birds is referred to also (Jer. 8-7 ; Can. 2-11, 12).

One of the turtle doves (*T. communis*) comes in April, another (*T. senegalensis*) roams the streets of towns half tame.

*Fowl*.—The word 'ayyit' is translated 'fowl' in the A.V. in certain places in which the R.V. has 'birds of prey' (Gen. 15-11 ; Job 28-7 ; Ez. 39-17—birds) elsewhere fowl is retained.

*Hoopoe and Lapwing*.—The Lapwing of the A.V. has become Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*) in the R.V. The Hebrew word is 'dukipath' (Lev. 11-19 ; Deut. 14-18). It is only mentioned among the unclean birds. The Hoopoe is a common spring visitor.

*Heron*.—This bird is only in the prohibited list (Lev. 9-19 ; Deut. 14-18). The R.V. has 'ibis' as a marginal reading. Herons are abundant (*A. cinerea* and *A. purpurea*). The ibis consorts with herons.

*Hunting*.—It will not be out of place to make some reference to hunting. Hunting for sport is a product of comparatively advanced civilization. Man could not afford to hunt for sport so long as his food supply had to be obtained in the chase. Nimrod was not a hunter for sport, but a mighty slayer of noxious wild animals.

The hunter is noted as uncouth (Gen. 10-9) but cunning. Birds were hunted (Sam. 26-20) as the partridge, and according to the law they had to be bled, similarly to the 'halal' of the Musalman : Lev. 17-13 :

And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among them, which taketh in hunting any beast or fowl that may be eaten ; he shall pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust. (See Deut. 12-16).

Bows and arrows were used (Gen. 27-3 ; etc.) and these were at times of bronze or bronze mounted (Ps. 18-34 ; Job 20-24) the arrows were tipped with flints or iron. Slings were in common use, the tribe of Benjamin excelling in their use (Jud. 20-16 ; I Chr. 12-2).

Nets (*resbeth*—Prov. 1-17; Hos. 5-1) and snares or nooses (*moquesh*—Amos 3-5) are mentioned and clubs (Jer. 41-39).  
Amos 3-5 :

Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is set for him ?

Ps. 69-20 :

Let their table before them become a snare ;  
And when they are in peace, let it become a trap

Job 18-9 :

A gin shall take him by the heel,  
And a snare shall lay hold on him.

The A.V. has 'robber' for snare.

The noose was used as also traps (Job 18-10). The fowler used such devices (Hos. 9-8). The word 'cage' in Jer. 5-27 should be 'trap'. Pits were used (Ez. 19-8). Decoys are mentioned (Eccus. 11-30).

*Nests*.—Many reference are made to nests, and a warning is given as to letting the parent birds go free (Deut. 22-6). Job refers to his house as his nest (Job 29-18). The Hebrew words is 'qen' (Gen. 6-14; Deut. 32-11; Nu. 24-21; Jer. 14-16; Hab. 2-9; Job 39-27).

*Night-hawk*.—The word rendered night-hawk is in Hebrew 'tēchmās' which merely means a bird of prey being connected with a root 'to tear'. The night jar is in no sense a bird of prey and identification is, therefore, uncertain. The Septuagint and Vulgate translate it by owl (Lev. 11-16; Deut. 14-15).

*Osprey*.—The Osprey is only given in the prohibited lists in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, and is a translation of the Hebrew 'ozniyyāh'. It is unlikely to have been the osprey as there were no hunting grounds for it and probably it is another eagle or a harrier. The word osprey (Fr. *ostraië*) is itself merely a corruption of *ossifraga*, the name of the lammageier.

*Ossifrage*.—See birds of prey above.

*Ostrich*.—In the A.V. the Hebrew words 'bath yaanāh' (Lev. 11-16; Deut. 14-15; Job 30-29; Is. 13-21; 34-13; 43-20; Jer. 50-39; Mic. 1-8) are translated 'owl'. But the word means 'daughter of greed'. Two other words 'yeēnīm' (Lam. 4-3) and 'reanim' (Job 39-13) are translated owl and peacock in the A.V., but should be ostrich (*Struthio camelus*) which is met with in Barbary, Syria, Arabia and even Mesopotamia, while formerly it inhabited Egypt.

The ostrich has a very weird cry not, it is said, unlike a loud groan.

Mic. 1-8 :

For this I will wail and howl ;  
I will go stripped and naked ;  
I will make a wailing like the jackals,  
And a mourning like the ostriches.

Its preference for lonely spots is noted :

Job 30-29 :

I am a brother to jackals  
And a companion to ostriches

Then Isaiah in describing the destruction of Edom cries :  
*Is. 34-13 :*

And thorns shall come up in her places, nettles and thistles in the fortresses thereof; and it shall be an habitation of jackals, a court for ostriches.

In that great lecture on natural history which comes in the 29th Chapter of Job there is a dissertation on the ostrich :

*Job 39-13:*

The wing of the ostrich rejoiceth ;  
 But are her pinions and feather kindly ?  
 For she leaveth her eggs on the earth,  
 And warmeth them in the dust,  
 And forgetteth that the foot may crush them,  
 Or that the wild beast may trample them.  
 She is hardened against her young ones, as if they were not hers,  
 Though her labour be in vain, she is without fear ;  
 Because God hath deprived her of wisdom.  
 Neither hath he imparted to her understanding.  
 What time she lifteth up herself on high,  
 She scorneth the horse and his rider.

The ostrich is too curious an instance of bird life not to attract attention, for a bird eight feet high which defends itself by kicking like a horse, has long eyelashes, only two toes and no wings to speak of, except ornamental plumes is an anomaly. The ostrich is polygamous, one cock having three or four hens. They lay in a common nest, a shallow pit scraped by their feet in the sand, which is heaped upon the sides as a protective wall. The cock begins the brooding as soon as a dozen eggs or so are laid, especially at night, by day their attendance is for watch and ward rather than hatching which is done by the sun's rays. The recognition of individual offspring by the mothers was thus not possible.

*Owls.*—The correction of owl to ostrich is given above. The words rendered owl are 'yansūph' (Lev. 11-17; Deut. 14-16; Is. 34-11), the 'great owl' but the Septuagint reads ibis: 'kos' (ib. and Ps. 102-6) little 'owl' and owl; 'tinsmeth' (Lev. 11-18; Deut. 14-16; Is. 34-11) is translated 'horned owl' in the R.V. but swan in the A.V. 'qippoz' (Is. 34-15) 'great owl' in A.V. and 'arrow-snake' in R.V. but as obviously a bird is meant the R.V. seems in error here; 'lilith' (Is. 34-14) in A.V. 'screech-owl' becomes 'nightmonster' in R.V. as in margin of A.V. Lilith is a fabulous monster, hairy and very fond of attacking infants, often appearing in female shape. Owls are very common in Palestine. *Athene glaux*, the 'bomeh', is very tame and a great favourite, *Otus ascalaphus*, etc.

*Peacocks.*—Mentioned in I. K. 10-22, 2 Chr. 9-21.

Once every year came the navy of Tarshish bringing gold and silver, ivory and apes and peacocks.

The word is 'tūkkiyyim' and as the bird was not indigenous but imported the name is considered to be a corruption of the Tamil word for this bird, 'tokei'. The passage in Job 39-13 has ostrich in R.V. for the peacock of A.V., the Hebrew word being 'renānim'.

*Pelican.*—See Cormorant.

*Porcupine*.—See Bittern.

*Raven*.—It was an unclean bird (Lev. 11-15; Deut. 14-14) and no doubt is not always distinguished from crows in the Bible. They are common in Palestine. The Hebrew word 'oreb' (Ar. Ghuráb) comes from a root meaning 'to be black', and hence includes all corvidae.

*Sea-mew*.—See Cuckow.

*Speckled bird of prey*.—This occurs in Jer. 12-9. The passage is :

Is mine heritage unto me as a speckled bird of prey?  
Are the birds of prey against her round about?

It is not very clear what is meant except that birds of prey are inimical.

*Stork*.—The stork is among the unclean birds, but the crane is not (Lev. 11-19; Deut. 14-18, Job 39-13; Ps. 104-17; Jer. 8-7; Zac. 5-9). The Hebrew word is 'chasideh' meaning 'loving kindness'. It is a useful bird in clearing caterpillars and locusts off the field', and is much prized in consequence, and nicknamed by the Arabs 'Am Said' or the 'Father of good luck'. It was hence sacred and is perhaps, therefore, mentioned to preserve it. The white stork (*Ciconia alba*) is the commonest though the black variety (*C. nigra*) occurs.

*Sparrow*.—The word translated sparrow is 'tsippor' (Ps. 84-3; 102-7—fowl in A. V.) which means only a small twittering bird (Ar. asfür (اصفور)). Small birds are not really distinguished and it is not possible to say what bird is actually intended. The 'sparrow on the house top' (Ps. 102-7) is possibly the *Petrocosyphus cyanea*, which is very common, its monotonous note being heard everywhere.

*Swallow*.—The Hebrew word 'deror' is rightly translated swallow. See Crane. Many varieties are met with, *H. rustica*, *C. urbana*, *Cotyle rupestris*, etc. Bee-eaters are possibly indicated by the same word.

*Swan*.—This bird has vanished from the R.V. in Lev. 11-18 and Deut. 14-16, and becomes 'horned owl' ('tinshemeth'). But probably the Ibis meant or a coot; the vulgate has 'porphyrio'.

Before we leave the birds I would draw the attention of readers to the great beauty of many of the passages in which the birds occur. But it is essential, if their real beauty is to be seen, that they should be read in the R. V., or better still in Professor Moulton's 'Modern Readers Bible'.

It is probable that no worse edited book ever issued from a press than our Authorized Version, and it is a remarkable proof of our unquestioning acceptance of the established, that for some three hundred years we made no attempt to improve the form in which the greatest treasure of the English language was placed before us. As has been remarked, if Shakespeare, Bacon, Milton, Hallam, and Tennyson were issued under one cover, no distinction being made between prose and poetry, all titles being excised, the names of all speakers omitted, speeches divided in the middle and sentences cut up into a convenient length for a certain width of column, and the chapters formed of an equal number of obtrusively numbered verses, irrespective of sense or subject, such a work would scarcely be an exaggeration of our Authorized Version. The Revised

Version, much as it leaves to be desired, is a great improvement; especially in the distinction made between prose and verse. But to continue our subject.

These nomad open-air dwelling authors could scarcely have failed to be influenced by the poetry of bird life, and so we find it.

In that wonderful song of Moses in the 32nd Chapter of Deuteronomy which begins :

Give ear, ye heavens, and I will speak ;  
 And let the earth hear the words of my mouth ;  
 My doctrine shall drop as the rain,  
 My speech shall distil as the dew,  
 As the small rain upon the tender grass,  
 And as the showers upon the herb.

and then he continues

*V. 9 :*

For the Lord's portion is his people ;  
 Jacob is the rock of his inheritance ;  
 He found him in a desert land,  
 And in the waste howling wilderness ;  
 He compassed him about, he cared for him,  
 He kept him as the apple of his eye ;  
 As the eagle that stirreth up her nest,  
 That fluttereth over her young,  
 He spread abroad his wings, he took them,  
 He bare them on his pinions ;

In the Song of Songs, that greatest of epithalamia, bird passages are frequent; but to get the full sense of this dramatic poem the speakers need to be indicated: the Bridegroom, the Bride, the King and the Choruses. In the second phase, in which the Bride is reciting the joys of courtship, we get a lovely spring song.

*The Bride :*

The voice of my beloved ! Behold he cometh  
 Leaping upon the mountains  
 Skipping upon the hills.  
 My beloved is like a roe or a young hart  
 Behold he standeth behind our wall,  
 He looketh in at the windows  
 He sheweth himself through the lattice.  
 My beloved spake, and said unto me :  
 ' Rise up, my love, my fair one,  
 And come away.  
 For, lo, the winter is passed  
 The rain is over and gone  
 The flowers appear on the earth  
 The time of the singing birds is come,  
 And the voice of the turtle is heard in our laud ;  
 The fig tree ripeneth her green figs,  
 And the vines are in blossom  
 They give forth their fragrance  
 Arise, my love, my fair one  
 And come away.  
 Oh my dove that art in the clefts of the rock,  
 In the covert of the steep place,  
 Let me see thy countenance,  
 Let me hear thy voice  
 For sweet is thy voice,  
 And thy countenance is comely.

One is tempted to quote for ever and it should all be read, but read intelligently.

In the Psalms, bird passages are many. We may take one instance ;  
*Ps.* 91 :

For he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler,  
And from the noisome pestilence,  
He shall cover thee with his pinions  
And under his wings shalt thou take refuge :

and again in Isaiah, who often uses bird metaphors :

*Is.* 18 :

Ah ! the land of the rustling of wings  
Which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia ;  
That sendeth ambassadors by the sea,  
Even in vessels of papyrus upon the waters.

In Jeremiah. 4-23-26 ; in describing his vision of the destruction  
of the earth, he cries :

I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was waste and void ; and the heavens and  
they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and  
all the hills moved to and fro. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and  
all the birds of the heaven were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful field  
was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the  
presence of the Lord, and before his fierce anger.

One more passage and I must leave it to my readers to search for  
themselves.

I will end with David's lament for Saul and Jonathan :

*1 Sam.* 31-19 :

Thy glory, O, Israel.  
Is slain upon thy high places ?  
How are the mighty. . . .  
Fallen !  
Tell it not in Gath,  
Publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon ;  
Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,  
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcized triumph.  
Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew nor rain upon you,  
Neither fields of offerings :  
For the shield of the mighty was vilely cast away.  
The shield of Saul, as of one not anointed with oils.  
From the blood of the slain  
From the feet of the mighty,  
The bow of Jonathan turned not back,  
And the sword of Saul returned not empty.  
Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives,  
And in their death they were not divided  
They were swifter than eagles  
They were stronger than lions,  
Ye daughters of Israel :  
Weep over Saul,  
Who clothed you in scarlet delicately  
Who put ornaments of gold upon your apparel  
How are the mighty. . . .  
Fallen in the midst of the battle  
O, Jonathan,  
Slain upon thy high places  
I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan  
Very pleasant hast thou been unto me  
Thy love to me was wonderful,  
Passing the love of women.  
How are the mighty. . . .  
Fallen !  
And the weapons of war  
Perished.



So whatever the technical imperfections of the translation we should be thankful to the good fortune that gave us our Bible in the age of Shakespeare and remember the words of Jesus, the son of Sirach:—

‘Ye are entreated therefore to read with favour and attention, and to pardon us if in any part of what we have laboured to interpret we may seem to have failed in some of the phrases. For things originally spoken in the Hebrew have not the same force in them when they are translated into another tongue.’

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*ayit*: Gen. 15-11; Is. 18-6; Job 28-7; Ez. 39-4.  
*tsippor*: Gen. 7-14; 15-10; Ez. 17-23; Ps. 8-8; 11-1 (and many other places).  
*baal kanaph*: Gen. 1-21; 7-14; Ps. 78-27; 148-10; Job 39-13 (and many other places).
- BITTERN (See *Porcupine*): Is. 14-23; 34-11; Zep. 2-14. [so in A.V. only.]
- CAGE: Jer. 5-27 (better ‘trap’).
- COCKS (N. T. only): Mt. 26-34, 74, 75; Mk. 13-35; 14-30, 68, 72; Lk. 12-34, 60, 61; Job 13-38, 18-27.
- CORMORANT, *shalakh*: Lev. 11-17; Deut. 14-17; Is. 34-11; Zep. 2-14 (see Pelican).
- CRANE, *agur*: Is. 38-14; Jer. 8-7.
- CROW (See *Raven*): Baruch 6-54.
- CUCKOW (See *Sea-mew*).
- DOVE AND TURTLE-DOVE, *yōnāh*: *tor*: *gozāl*: Gen. 8-8, 9, 11; 10-12; 15-9; Lev. 1-14; 5-7, 11; 12-6, 8; 14-22, 30; 15-14, 29; 12-6; 14-22; Num. 6-10; Ps. 55-6; 68-13; 74-19; Cant. 1-15; 2-12, 14; 4-1; 5-2, 12; 6-9; Is. 38-14; 59-11; 60-8; Ez. 7-16; Nah. 2-7; Jer. 8-7; 48-28; Kos. 7-11; 11-11; Mat. 3-16; 10-16; 21-12; Mark. 1-10; Lk. 2-24; 3-22; In. 1-32; 2-14, 16.
- EAGLE, *nesher*: Ex. 19-4; Lev. 11-13; Deut. 14-12; 28-49; 32-11; 2 Sam. 1-23; Job, 9-26; 39-27; Ps. 103-5; Prov. 23-5; 30-17, 19; Is. 40-31; Jer. 4-13; 48-40; 49-16, 22; Lam. 4-19; Ez. 1-10; 10-14; 17-3, 7; Dan. 4-33; 7-4; Kos. 8-1; Obads 4; Mic. 1-16; Hab. 1-8; Mat. 24-28; Lk. 17-37; Rev. 4-7; 12-14.
- FALCON, *ayyah* (kite in A.V.): Lev. 11-14; Deut. 14-13; Job 28-17 (Vulture in A.V.)
- FATTED FOWL (Goose or Duck): 1. K. 22.
- FOWL (See Birds).
- FOWLER: Ps. 91-3; 124-7; Prov. 6-5; Jer. 5-26; Hos. 9-8.
- GIER-EAGLE, *beres* (Ossifrage in A. V.): Lev. 11-13; Deut. 14-12.
- GLEDE, *rahaḥ*: Deut. 14-13.
- HAWK, Lev. 11-16; Deut. 14-15.
- HEN: Mt. 23-37; Lk. 13-34.

HERON, *anaphah* : Lev. 11-19; Deut. 14-18.

HOOPOE (Lapwing in A.V.) : Lev. 11-19; Deut. 14-18.

HUNTING (See article) : Lev. 11-19; Deut. 14-18; 1 Sam. 26-20.

IBIS (See Owl).

KITE, *da-ah* : Lev. 11-14; *dayyah* : Deut. 14-13.

LAPWING : (A. V.) (See Hoopoe).

NEST : Gen. 6-14; Num. 24-21; Deut. 22.6; 32-11; Job 29-18; 32-27; Ps. 84-3; 104-17; Prov. 27-8; Is. 10-14; 16-2; 34-15; Jer. 22-25; 42-28; 49-16; Ez. 31-6, 10-9; Ob. 4; Hab. 2-9; Mat. 8-20; Lk. 9-58.

NET (See Snares and Hunting).

NIGHT-HAWK, *tachmās* : Lev. 11-16; Deut. 14-15.

OSPREY, *ozniyyah* : Lev. 11-13; Deut. 14-12.

OSSIFRAGE (See Gier-eagle).

OSTRICH, *bathya-anāh* : Lev. 11-16; Deut. 14-15; Job 30-29; Is. 13-21; 34-13; 43-21; Jer. 50-39; Micah 1-8; (A.V. has owl.) *ye-enim*; La. 4-3; *reanim* : Job 39-13) A. V. has peacock).

OWL, *kos* : Lev. 11-17; Deut. 14-16; Ps. 102-6.

*quippoz* : Is. 34-15. [Great Owl in A.V.] Arrow-snake of R.V. must be a bird.

*tinshemeth* : Lev. 11-18; Deut. 14-16. [Swan in A.V., horned owl in R.V.]

*lilith* : Is. 34-14 [Screech owl of A.V.], in R.V. is night Tonster.

*gansūph* : Lev. 11-17; Deut. 14-16. In Is. 34-11 is probably the Ibis.

PEACOCK, *tūkkīyyīm* : 1. K. 10-22; 2. Chr. 9-21.

PARTRIDGE, *qore* : Is. 26-20; Jer. 17-11; Sam. 26-20; Eccus. 11-30.

PELICAN, *qā-ath* : Lev. 11-18; Deut. 14-17; Ps. 102-6; Is. 34-11 Zep. 2-14.

PORCUPINE, *qippod* (Bittern of A.V.) : Is. 14-23; 24-11; Zep. 2-14.

QUAIL, *selar* : Ex. 16-13; Num. 11-31; Ps. 106-409.

RAVEN, *oreb* : Gen. 8-7; Lev. 11-15; Deut. 14-14; 1 K. 17-4, 6; Job 38-41; Ps. 147-9; Prov. 30-17; Cant. 5-11; Is. 34-11; Lk. 12-24.

SEA-MEW, *shachaph* : Lev. 11-18; Deut. 14-15.

SNARES (See Hunting) : Ps. 91-3; 124-7; Prov. 7-23; Eccus. 9-12; Hos. 9-8; Amos 3-5.

SPARROW, *tsippor* (any twittering bird) : Lev. 14-4; Ps. 84-3; 102-7; Mat. 10-29; Lk. 12-6.

SPECKLED FOWL : Gen. 12-9.

STORK, *chasīdah* : Lev. 11-19; Deut. 14-18; Job 39-13.

*flight* of Ps. 104-17; Jer. 8-7; Zac. 5-8; 9.

SWALLOW, *derōr* : Ps. 84-3; Prov. 26-2 : Is. 38-14; Jer. 8-7; (see Crane).

SWAN, *tinshemeth* (See Owl and Ibis) : Lev. 11-18; Deut. 14-16.

TURTLEDOVE, *tor* : Gen. 15-9, Lev. 1-14; 5-7; 11; 12-6, 8; 14-22, 30; 15-14, 29; Num. 6-10; Ps. 74-19; Cant. 2-12; Jer. 8-7; Lk. 2-24.

VULTURE, *rāchām* : Lev. 11-18; Deut. 14-17.